

"GRIT."

BY MRS. JAMES WARD.

One generation is apt to be contemptuous or intolerant of the educational theories of its predecessors ; what was faulty in them is made off-hand accountable for all that is defective in the present result, while what was good has become such a matter-of-course as to be scarcely acknowledged. But while we all think that our parents and guardians made gross mistakes with us, and that our turning out so well is entirely due to our superior natural dispositions, we fancy that *our children at least* will have no cause to complain of their training, and no pretext for making their forebears accountable for their failings and follies. Let us wait a bit, however, and we shall find the next generation taking its turn to pick holes. Probably they will find more fault than we did in like case ; for children are now taken into confidence about themselves, and their own great importance is no longer scrupulously concealed from them. Only the other day I heard of some children of twelve or thirteen being present at a parents' meeting ! The old-fashioned humble deference to the opinion of one's elders is not in this way generated, neither is it nowadays much approved. Many are of opinion that obedience should never be exacted from children without reasons given ; and this doctrine carried to its logical conclusion would also constitute them judges of the sufficiency of the reasons, and of the reasons of the reasons ! Children are learning very early to judge their parents both intellectually and morally, and to criticise their own training. Are we quite sure that our modern methods of education are going to stand this criticism ?

The theory of education in vogue with the best parents and teachers is very plausible ; it seems, whether consciously or not, to spring from Froebel's principle of securing to children the freest and most natural development possible, by surrounding

them from the first with sympathy and kindly aid, and by warding off from them rude jars and contradictions until they have grown so into harmony with the world that these no longer exist. There is great attraction about such a scheme as this ; it is idyllic ; it charms like a dream of Paradise ; while the old plan of repressing and thwarting the child, and forcing him into some sort of unwilling conformity to a stern environment, stands out in hideous contrast. Even the wise and gentle Locke, opposed as he was to much of the harsh and unsympathetic education of his day, says things which startle us. We come upon such statements as these : "Children should be used to submit their desires and go without their longings *from their very cradles*." . . . "Whatever they were importunate for they should be sure, for that very reason, to be denied." . . . "Children must leave it to the choice and ordering of their parents what they think properst for them, and how much ; and must not be permitted to choose for themselves, and say, 'I would have wine, or white bread' ; the very naming of it should make them lose it." Again he says, "Children love dominion ; and this is the first original of most vicious habits." "They show their love of dominion in their desire to have things to be theirs. They would have propriety and possession, pleasing themselves with the power which that seems to give, and the right they thereby have to dispose of them as they please." This seems to us natural and harmless enough, but Locke continues : "He who thinks that these two roots of almost all the injustice and contention that so disturb human life are not early to be weeded out . . . neglects the proper season to lay the foundations of a good and worthy man." In another connection he declares that "crying is a fault that should not be tolerated in children" from whatever cause it proceeds. "For," he sagely remarks, "the many inconveniences this life is exposed to, require we should not be too sensible of every little hurt." . . . "That effeminacy of spirit, which is to be prevented or cured, nothing that I know so much increases in children as crying." He even goes so far when discussing courage and hardness, as to advise that children should occasionally be put to some pain to accustom them to bear it ; although he adds, "I am not so foolish to propose the Lacedæmonian discipline in our age and constitution." But "satisfy a child by a